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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State
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FROM : AmEmbassy GUATEMALA DATE: June 22, 1978
SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Violence and Human Rights: April 1978
REF :

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SUMMARY. Begin Unclassified. Political violence in April was high. For the third month in a row there were 25 or more deaths which appeared to be politically related. The tally for April was 34 incidents, which produced 30 deaths, 3 wounded and 12 alleged kidnappings.

During April, Vice President Mario SANDOVAL denounced President Carter's human rights policies. His views were disavowed by President LAUGERUD. President-elect LUCAS' spokesman, meanwhile, declared that the new administration would be based on respect for human rights. END SUMMARY.

Government-associated Violence. An Army communique stated that in Esquipulas, Chiquimula Department, a military patrol exchanged fire with an armed group, killing one of the band, Justo CARRANZA Pérez. The Army regretted that one woman bystander was also killed and another person wounded in the crossfire. The Minister of Government announced that the dead man was a member of the "Pacheco (MLN) gang". (See Guatemala A-48).

In Huehuetenango Department, parcelarios (small landowners) around Barrillas sent President Laugerud a complaint that three men dressed as soldiers had landed in a helicopter and kidnapped one of their companions, Robén ALFARO, whereabouts unknown. The military commander at Playón, according to the parcelarios, denied any knowledge of Alfaro.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/AR
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although he said his contingent had captured parcelario Faustino PINTO whom he accused of being a messenger for the guerrillas (unspecified). The parcelarios also denounced the death of a teacher, Raiza GIRON, and the kidnapping of Vicente SARAT, about whom no one, including the Army, would admit knowledge.

The police or Army were involved in or blamed for a number of April disappearances. Juan RODRIGUEZ Chamó, an optical worker, was seized in Guatemala by three alleged plainclothesmen with submachine guns and taken away in a car reportedly with police plates. His mother sought for him in vain at various police stations, finally locating him at the Pavón Penitentiary. He allegedly had been caught peddling a bag of marijuana.

Freddy CARRENO and Erick ESTRADA Riquelme, two secondary students, were taken away by armed plainclothesmen in front of their school in Guatemala City. Students and school officials immediately sought out the Minister of Education who checked out the matter. A case of mistaken identity, said the Minister of Government, adding that the students had looked suspicious. They were released.

The National Workers Central (a leftist labor confederation) charged three detectives with responsibility for the disappearance of three Guatemala City cemetery workers who had gone to court trying to get labor benefits.

The mother of student Carlos MARTINEZ Motta, who died in an E. Quiché hospital on April 18, charged his death was due to police torture. Martínez supposedly was arrested for possessing drugs. Two policemen whom he had blamed for his torture before he died were arrested. Records indicate they had brought other prisoners to the hospital suffering from "sick stomachs" who also later died.

A university student, Ernesto RIVAS Castellanos, claimed to have escaped from kidnappers in Guatemala City. They had asked to see his documents, representing themselves as government authorities. When he asked for their identification, they pulled him into their jeep, where Rivas noticed another body on the floor. Shortly thereafter he jumped from the car and fled. A police patrol car passed by at that moment, preventing pursuit by the kidnappers whom Rivas could not identify because of the darkness.

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Mixco (Guatemala Department) police denied "kidnapping" student Manuel de Jesús VIVAR. He was arrested and jailed, they said, for having threatened the owner of a bar who refused to give him money for the EGP (Guerrilla Army of the Poor).

Two men were kidnapped in Escuintla (one a businessman) by armed men claiming to be police. The wife of one of the men noted the licence numbers. Police deny knowledge of those kidnapped.

The National Committee for Labor Unity (CNUS), a leftist labor organization, denounced the Army for having taken away a campesino, Alejandro VELASQUEZ Tomás, a coop member in Ixcán. It maintains the Army grabbed him at his home in the middle of the night. His wife told the press the local military detachment disclaims any knowledge.

According to the tabloid El Impacto, the "Death Squad" murdered three supposed drug traffickers (two men and a pregnant woman). They were taken by the "squad" from Guatemala and their bodies turned up on the south coast near Mazatenango. According to El Impacto, relatives refuse to claim the bodies for fear of reprisals.

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COMMENT. The following might be kept in mind in assessing the sampling of incidents: Article 46 of the Constitution requires a court order to detain someone, unless the person is caught while committing a crime. According to Article 51, anyone detained must be informed of the cause, charges, accuser, etc., within 48 hours and from that moment has the right to have his lawyer present. He should be arraigned or set free within five days. A judge who prolongs this period will be held responsible. Any authority responsible for holding a person incommunicado shall be removed from his position, without prejudice to the imposition of other penalties prescribed by law. If reported accurately, several of the acknowledged arrests would appear to violate these provisions.

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Guerrilla Violence. Identifiable guerrilla violence was nonexistent in April. The press carried reports of the migration of EGP guerrillas from the Oriente, especially Chiquimula, toward the northern parts of El Quiché and Huehuetenango Departments. The guerrillas reportedly sought to get out of the way of the Army's frequent post-election sweeps in eastern Guatemala looking for armed MLN bands. The Minister of Government and the Army denied the reports.

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Other Violence. An ex-chief of the Corps of Detectives (Salvador CUELLAR) was attacked and his bodyguard killed. When the bodyguard's cousin (a member of G-2) came to view the body, he was shot dead by another detective (reportedly a member of President-elect Lucas' security force). Cuellar was also reportedly attached to Lucas' security force.

Fifteen of the 30 persons murdered in April were unidentifiable. Some others were identified by name, but available reports provided no clues to the motive or identity of the murderers. Only signs of torture suggest these killings were politically inspired.

Campesino Activity. Campesino/Indian unrest increased in intensity (i.e., action rather than protests). In Sumpango (Sacatepequez Department), for example, the mayor was threatened with lynching for having failed to provide inhabitants with water. In San Marcos, some 200 campesinos locked up six Customs police, taking away their weapons. The police had captured a campesino for making illicit spirits. The Army rescued the policemen and jailed the local chief of comisionados militares, accused of directing the campesino attack.

Human Rights Atmospherics. Vice President Mario Sandoval went to Washington, D.C., the end of April to attend an "anti-communist" meeting, presumably of the World Anti-Communist League of which he is a founding member. While there, he denounced President Carter's human rights policy which he asserted is destroying democratic institutions in Latin

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America. Conservative Prensa Libre supported Sandoval's views. President Laugerud stated that the views were Sandoval's, not those of the Guatemalan Government. President-elect Lucas, a week earlier, had expressed through his spokesman, his intention to establish an administration which would guarantee human rights in Guatemala. On the other hand, Javier HERNANDEZ O. of moderate La Tarde, normally a human rights supporter, criticized "President Carter's policy" of pressuring the IFIs, such as World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, to deny loans to countries guilty of human rights violations.

Statistics. Of the 30 deaths in April, 5 were in and around Guatemala City, 10 were in the Indian highlands, 4 were in the Oriente, 10 were in the Pacific lowlands, and 1 was in Izabal.



PUEBLO: "¿SABES QUE VAN A MANIFESTAR POR-
QUE LA VIDA ESTA MUY CARA?"
KJELL: "PERO SI AQUI LA VIDA NO VALE NADA!"

CAPTION

The Public: Do you know they're going to demonstrate over the high cost of living?

President Laugerud : But life's worth nothing here.

BOSTER *CRP*

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